



# THE UNWAVERING PATH

## A Multiclassing Quest for Monks and Paladins

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## INTRODUCTION

Monks and paladins, lawful professions at heart, demand consistency of themselves more than any other quality. Both classes adhere to traditions for the sake of creating standards upon which they can always count. From the repetition of exercise, meditation, and prayer, both classes reinforce the strength of their convictions, whether from within (the self) or from without (the divine). As such, the moment their focus changes to pursue a different path, for even one level, both classes must forever abandon that profession. These characters must make a lasting choice before multiclassing, deciding if they have advanced far enough as monks or paladins for their entire career.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

The *Unwavering Path* makes use of the information in the three D&D core rulebooks—the *Player's Handbook* (PH), *Dungeon Master's Guide* (DMG), and *Monster Manual* (MM), as well as *Monster Manual II* (MMII), *Monster Manual III* (MMIII), *Fiend Folio* (FF), and *Fiendish Codex I: The Hordes of the Abyss* (FCI).



## THE UNWAVERING PATH (LEVELS 3–5)

*"I never stopped being a monk, even after I discovered the magic that flowed through my veins. Still, I had to convince myself first."*

—The human Lornis Dareborn, monk/sorcerer

Monks and paladins often find themselves tempted by the special abilities of other classes and prestige classes. They see how many of these abilities can aid them in their fight against the unruly forces of chaos. Straying from the monk or paladin class, however, comes with a stern warning. Once you follow another path, there is no turning back. But what if a monk could take levels of sorcerer or a paladin could take levels of rogue and then return to being a martial disciple of justice or a holy defender of truth?



## LORE OF THE UNWAVERING PATH

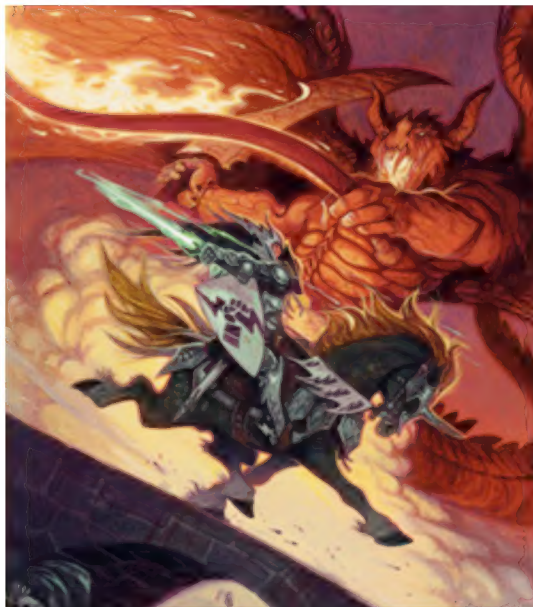
Characters with ranks in Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (local), Knowledge (nature), or Knowledge (religion) can research the Unwaving Path to learn more about this quest. When a character makes a skill check, read or paraphrase the appropriate information from one of the following tables, including the information from lower DCs.

If the character is looking for a way to ignore her monk or paladin multiclassing restriction, use the entire table. If the character had heard of the Unwaving Path specifically and wants to see whether she knows more about it, reveal information only for check results of 20 or higher.

After getting information from a Knowledge check, the characters should be able to learn more about the Unwaving Path by consulting masters or priests who keep track of the extradimensional anomaly, or by trying to find individuals who were referenced in the information they have gained. Such resources can reveal the information for Knowledge DCs higher than the PCs' check results, or any other information about the Unwaving Path that you'd like the characters to have.

### KNOWLEDGE (ARCANA)

DC	Result
15	During certain days of the summer months, directly associated with low ocean tides, demons have crossed over from the Abyss and inexplicably appeared on various coastlines.
20	At certain times during an ocean tide, lawfully minded people can open fissures in reality through which outsiders from other planes of existence can enter the Material Plane.



### KNOWLEDGE (LOCAL)

DC	Result
10	Stories tell of adventurers walking into the ocean during low tides, never to be seen again. Those few who return do so minutes, hours, or even days later.
15	Whenever adventurers disappear into the ocean, locals tend to stay away from the coastline for about a week. If the adventurers do not return, something profanely evil usually appears in their place.
20	Villagers who make their living fishing along ocean coastlines have heard of demons that emerge out of the depths, shortly after lawfully minded adventurers disappeared into the same waters.
25	Several years back, during the lowest tide of summer, a local boy named Thodun Daystorm, who had originally left the community to become a paladin, returned home and marched into the ocean on what he called a quest of self-discovery. He was never heard from again. No more than three days later, a winged creature, immolated with fire, emerged out of the water in the same place where Thodun disappeared and took off into the sky, laughing raucously.

### KNOWLEDGE (NATURE)

DC	Result
15	Places located near the coastlines of oceans have portals to an alternate dimension that can be opened for a short time.
20	When the tides are at their lowest, those who know how to open fissures in reality can travel through them into a bridging dimension.
25	For about three days a month, during the season of summer, when ocean tides reach their lowest points, lawfully minded people can focus their spirit to open a dimensional pathway that leads into another plane of existence between this world and the Abyss.

### KNOWLEDGE (RELIGION)

DC	Result
10	Former monks and paladins who abandoned their calling have been known to become monks and paladins again.
15	There is a quest, that masters and priests never talk about openly, called the Unwaving Path. The quest allows people who were once monks or paladins to embrace those callings again after pursuing different professions.
20	Those who seek the Unwaving Path must travel to an ocean coastline during the lowest tides of summer and meditate on their desire to become a monk or paladin again. If they can create the needed state of mind, the Unwaving Path opens for them and their companions, which can then be walked along.
25	The Unwaving Path leads to an oppressively hot extradimensional locality that bridges the Material Plane and the Abyss, wherein demons test the faith of adventurers who wish to become monks or paladins again. A gift is offered, that if accepted, must be returned in kind before continuing along the path.
30	Whenever a former monk or paladin dies while following the Unwaving Path, or fails to return a demonic gift, the demons that tested her are released onto the Material Plane, free to murder and pillage as they are wont to do.



What if their devotion to being a monk or paladin never diminished during their exploration of other professions? The Unwavering Path quest offers former monks and paladins a way to test the strength of their convictions.

Those who know about the Unwavering Path caution those who seek the quest to be certain in their desire. Many who walk the path find themselves trapped along the way, unable to move forward and unable to double back. They must find a way to end the journey or expire along the way. While the reported methods for completing the quest have been similar, those who successfully walk the path come back with different stories to tell about their experiences, but also are more confident for having endured them.

Characters can embark upon the Unwavering Path in any part of the world where an ocean tide exists. The cyclical ebbing and surging nature of ocean tides represents the fluctuating choices that people make during their lives, some of which return them to where they began. The path is an extradimensional anomaly that monks and paladins, who still meet the alignment and code of conduct prerequisites of their class, can open. A character must first attain a meditative state of mind, after which the path becomes apparent. The quest can be a solitary one, but a character may also bring companions along by instructing them how to proceed.

## THE WATER'S EDGE

A character can embark upon the Unwavering Path from the coastline of any ocean that is either connected to a mainland continent or island. For three days every month, during the season of summer, when the ocean tide reaches its lowest point, the Unwavering Path opens for about 1 hour (1/2 hour on the day before and after the lowest tide).

A former monk or paladin must travel out to the farthest point of the tide, meditate for 15 minutes, and succeed on a DC 15 Concentration check to create a spiritual focus. This spiritual focus opens a fissure in reality and grants the ability to see the Unwavering Path, which appears as a straight line of luminescent, ionized air leading directly into the ocean. The character must negotiate over seaweed, shells, and stones until completely submerged underwater (walking at her normal height). During this time, the character moves through the water as if affected by a *freedom of movement* and *water breathing* spell. Those who move into an adjacent 5-foot square on either side of the Unwavering Path are affected by the water normally.

Once a character attains the spiritual focus needed to sense the Unwavering Path, her awareness persists

until willfully dispelled from her mind. A former monk or paladin can instruct her companions on how to follow the Unwavering Path. Once every member of the party submerges underwater (walking normally) they are simultaneously transported into a bridging dimension between worlds.

The divine and profane magic that saturates the bridging dimension redirects any attempts to teleport into or out of it. Thus, whether the PCs arrive by magic or on foot after traveling to a coastline, they come to the farthest edge of an ocean tide.

## Random Encounters

Entrances to the Unwavering Path may well be fraught with chaotic creatures that have come to expect lawfully minded adventurers to frequent the area, and so lay in wait to ambush them. You can either roll once on the table below or select one encounter that you prefer. The listed creatures are chaotic in their alignment or behavior and aquatic in their subtype. Creatures who know how the Unwavering Path works can exploit the character's lack of mobility or even attempt to force them off the path (to be affected by the water normally).

### THE WATER'S EDGE ENCOUNTERS

d%	Encounter	EL
1–10	Shark, Medium (MM 279)	1
11–20	Squid (MM 281)	1
21–30	Shark, Large (MM 279)	2
31–40	2 ixitxachitl (MMII 128)	2
41–50	Water mephit (MM 185)	3
51–60	Ixitxachitl, vampiric (MMII 129)	3
61–70	Sea hag (MM 144)	4
71–80	Skulvyn (FF 54)	4
81–90	Morkoth (MMII 152)	5
91–100	Sirine (MMII 185)	5

## BRIDGING DIMENSION

The monk or paladin, and accompanying party members (if any), are transported into an extradimensional locality. Read or paraphrase the following text:

The smell of brimstone and sulfur are the first sensations that reach you. Smoke hangs in the bright orange sky of your new surroundings, matched by a copper-red landscape of imposing crags that impossibly lean and tower over the firmament. The ground beneath your feet begins to shake, rumble, and then violently quake as a long narrow passageway opens before you, almost as if an enormous axe blade cleft the mountain range in two. Although difficult to see, an intense fire burns at the opposite end of this newly formed corridor, from which waves of heat pulse against your skin and black smoke continually billows into the sky.



Although it may seem otherwise to the PCs, they have not reached the Abyss yet. They are, however, very close. The stink of tanar'ri is apparent here precisely because demons regularly pass through this locality. Any former monk or paladin who has not dispelled their spiritual focus can sense the Unwavering Path stretching through the newly formed corridor in a straight line for about one mile.

Night and day do not exist in this bridging dimension, the temperature condition is "very hot" (see Heat Dangers on page 303 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), natural healing is not possible, and magical healing restores only one-half as many hit points. Untold evil has been performed in this place, and so the *detect evil* spell reveals a landscape that radiates strong evil. This grows to overwhelming evil as the corridor is traversed.

If the PCs travel in any direction other than down the mountain corridor, they must succeed on a Fortitude saving throw every 10 minutes (DC 20, +1 per previous check) or be sickened for 1d4 rounds by the ambient evil. For every 24 hours that characters spend anywhere in this bridging dimension, another Fortitude save must be made to avoid becoming permanently sickened (DC 10, + 5 per previous 24 hours of exposure). A *restoration* spell is required to remove this condition. If already sickened, the character becomes nauseated.

In addition, characters who attempt to climb or fly over the corridor or crags encounter a thick choking smoke 60 feet above the ground (originating from the corridor fire) and must make a Fortitude saving throw each round (DC 15, +1 per previous check). A character who chokes for 2 consecutive rounds takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage.

**Corruption Points:** Alternatively, taint points may be used for this locality (see The Taint of Evil and Tainted Locations, pages 62 and 68 respectively of *Heroes of Horror*). In this case, characters automatically take 1 point of corruption for every 10 minutes spent traveling away from the mountain corridor and make the same daily Fortitude saving throws to resist taking 1d3 points of corruption each 24 hours of exposure.

## MOUNTAIN CORRIDOR

A character who walks down the one-mile long, 20-foot wide corridor encounters the occasional skeleton that looks to have died from heat exposure or starvation. In some cases, pieces of metal armor litter the corridor like bread crumbs that eventually lead to a body. The temperature condition is "severe heat" within the corridor, which increases to "extreme heat" within 60 feet of

the corridor end (see Heat Dangers, page 303 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

**Note:** PCs who turn around and double back along the mountain corridor, after taking even one step into the newly formed passageway, discover that the passageway now stretches infinitely behind them into the distance. PCs can literally walk forever in this direction, but would have to cover that ground again if they turn back. In addition, any character who attempts to climb or fly out of the mountain corridor encounters the same choking smoke 60 feet above the ground.



**Approaching the Corridor End:** As the PCs near the corridor end, read or paraphrase the following text:

The fire you originally perceived is revealed to be a pair of burning wooden gates, each 10 feet wide and 30 feet tall. Despite the intense heat generated by the flames, the wooden gates, braced with metal, are never truly consumed, continually billowing black smoke into the upper corridor and sky. This distraction, however, is nothing compared to the creature, most certainly a demon, standing in front of the gates, smiling calmly as you approach.



The character level of a former monk or paladin and accompanying party members (if any) determines the demon or demons that stand before the gates. For higher level characters, scale the encounters with the former monk or paladin and their accompanying party members.

#### THE FIERY GATE ENCOUNTER

Party Members	Party Level	Demon (CR)
1	3	Dretch (MM 42) or quasit (MM 46) (CR 2)
1	4	Rutterkin (FCI 51) (CR 3)
1	5	2 dretch (MM 42) or 2 quasits (MM 46) (CR 4)
2	3	2 dretch (MM 42) or 2 quasits (MM 46) (CR 4)
2	4	Juvenile nabassu (FCI 48) or jovoc (MMII 58) (CR 5)
2	5	Babau (MM 40) (CR 6)
3	3	Juvenile nabassu (FCI 48) or jovoc (MMII 58) (CR 5)
3	4	Babau (MM 40) (CR 6)
3	5	Arrow demon (MMIII 34) or succubus (MM 47) (CR 7)
4	3	Babau (MM 40) (CR 6)
4	4	Arrow demon (MMIII 34) or succubus (MM 47) (CR 7)
4	5	2 babau (MM 40) or palrethee (MMII 59) (CR 8)

**Tactics:** The demon or demons are automatically aware of any creature within 100 feet whose thoughts they can detect, but must otherwise rely on Spot checks. The demon or demons have been given the opportunity to pass to the Material Plane, but must defeat the PCs without engaging them in battle. The demon or demons address only the former monk or paladin of a party and make one statement:

*“Beyond these gates lies your path.”*

The demon or demons gesture toward the gates and allow the PCs to approach uncontested. Any character who approaches the gates notices letters carved into the wooden surface beneath the flames. Characters who succeed on a DC 10 Knowledge (religion) check recognize these letters from the Celestial alphabet. Any character who can read Celestial can decipher the following text:

*“Return any harm given before passing through these gates alive.”*

Touching the gates deals 1d6 points of fire damage and 1d6 points of profane damage. Gripping either gate handle to open a gate deals 2d6 points of fire damage and 2d6 points of profane damage and imposes a –2 penalty on attack rolls, Climb, Craft, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Forgery, Heal, Open Lock, Sleight of

Hand, and Use Rope checks until the damage to the character’s hand is healed. A Fortitude save (DC 10 + damage taken) allows the character to “tough it out” and ignore this penalty. The PCs can make a Strength check as a full-round action when attempting to open the gate, but no amount of force will do so at this point.

**Developments:** If asked how to open the gates, the demon or demons will address the former monk or paladin and open both of their hands (two demons will each open one hand):

*“To follow the path, accept my (our) gift.”*

This statement prompts characters to make a single Sense Motive check opposed by the Bluff checks of each demon present. If the characters win, they receive an unnerving feeling that the offered “gift” is double sided, potentially resulting in harm.

A former monk or paladin who places her hands into the hands of the demon or demons is immediately infused with profane energy and must make a Fortitude save to avoid becoming permanently shaken (DC 10, + CR of demon or demons). A *restoration* spell is required to remove this condition. If the character is already shaken, they are now frightened.

Once the infusion of profanity has been accepted, the former monk or paladin now has a chance to open the fiery gates with a DC 20 Strength check as a full-round action. Touching or gripping either gate or handle no longer deals any damage (but only these burning gates and handles).

Characters who look through an open gate can see only light disappearing into impenetrable darkness.

**Depravity Points:** Alternatively, taint points may be used for this interaction (see The Taint of Evil, pages 6 of *Heroes of Horror*). In this case, former monks or paladins automatically take 1d6 points of depravity for accepting the infusion of profanity from the demon or demons.

#### ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES

Depending on the decisions made by PCs, the following consequences may result.

- A former monk or paladin accepts the infusion of profanity, forces one or both gates open, and walks through.

This character finds herself in the Abyss, gains nothing from the quest, and is greeted by a welcoming party of demons who are accustomed to adventurers making this mistake. The Encounter Level of this encounter should be “overpowering” (EL 1+ higher than the ECL of one character, EL 3+ for two





characters, EL 4+ for three characters, and EL 5+ for a party of four characters). The demon or demons back in the corridor may now use the gates to enter the Material Plane.

- A former monk or paladin does not accept the infusion of profanity but attacks the demon or demons without provocation.

This character gains nothing from the quest, even if another party member attacks the demon or demons without provocation. The gates open by themselves if the demon or demons are defeated, leading back to the coastline where the quest began. If the demon or demons defeat the characters, they may use the gates to enter the Material Plane.

- A former monk or paladin accepts the infusion of profanity, but attacks and defeats the demon or demons before attempting to force open one or both gates.

This character successfully completes the quest. The gates open by themselves once the demon or demons are defeated, leading back to the coastline where the quest began. If the demon or demons had defeated the characters, they would have used the gates to enter the Material Plane.

- A former monk or paladin refuses the infusion of profanity, awaits her death by purposely failing her heat danger saving throws (deliberately forgoing rolls), dies in the bridging dimension, and becomes a disembodied spirit (gaining a fly speed with perfect maneuverability equal to her ground speed).

This character might successfully complete the quest. The gates open by themselves, leading back to the coastline where the quest began. The character can either allow herself to die permanently at this point or move through the gates and successfully complete the quest. A *true resurrection* spell is cast on the character (along with any accompanying party member who died and moved through the gates after becoming a spirit). Her body appears back on the coastline where the quest began, but all of her possessions remain in the bridging dimension.

## COMPLETING THE QUEST

Upon completing this quest, the character may forevermore multiclass back into the class (monk or paladin) in which she had taken one or more levels. If the character had taken one or more levels in both classes, choose one.

## RETURNING TO THE UNWAVERING PATH

Characters may return to the Unwavering Path multiple times, but the benefits of completing the quest can be enjoyed only twice if the character has levels in both monk and paladin. The quest, however, must be completed differently each time.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Kolja Raven Lquette** is perhaps best known for creating *The Waking Lands* website, but has also co-authored *Races of the Dragon* and *Weapons of Legacy*, in addition to providing material for *Five Nations*, the upcoming *Complete Mage*, and various articles and enhancements for the Wizards of the Coast website.